

FREE INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Nashville

ISSUE

4

News + views
Reviews

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FACUAL

As anyone's who's into new music in Nashville knows, Factual is one of the best bands this town has ever produced. Factual plays driving, urgent, electronic pop that's damn catchy too. Despite numerous changes in personnel, the band's following and sound has continued to expand. They frequently embark on extended tours throughout the South and East Coast and are always hot when in town. The only band to be featured on both the Never in Nashville and London Side of Nashville compilations, Factual has just released their first single all their own, "Your Way"/"Think to the Beat". This record is superbly produced, the songs are excellent, and the packaging will really open your eyes. Definitely our pick hit this issue. N.I.R. recently talked with Robb Earls (keyboards, lead vocals), Bone Borwn (percussion), and Skot Nelson (guitar) about the band (loveable bassist/vocalist Johnny Hollywood was out-of-town) and here's what was said:

N.I.R. - As one of Nashville's oldest new music bands, why do you think you've survived when other bands haven't?

Robb - Probably because in the last year the band has been committed to becoming more than a local band. We've been trying to expand our territory and it's given us a little more momentum and direction than a lot of local bands. Everybody who's joined this band has had a certain commitment to seriousness to say we've done our local time, so to speak, and now it's time to break out of this and become a national band. It's an important commitment I think a lot of very good bands locally have chosen not to take for one reason or another and it's happened to make a difference in the long run as to their durability and momentum.

N.I.R. - How did recording your own single differ from doing the compilations?

Robb - It was a matter of control, of more control in what we were doing. Our previous experiences have left something to be desired, not to step on anyone's toes. We wanted more control as far as knowing what was right and what was wrong. We're basically a live band, and we're proud of that fact. Although we do well in the studio we're not the type of band that goes in and creates this wall of sound they can't reproduce live. Of course, when we go into the studio we like to be creative, and I think there's some things on there we're going to be trying to live up to and pull off live, but it's nothing we can't pull off. (Snickers and laughter and "yeahs" from Bone & Skot).

N.I.R. - When you first started electronic bands weren't too popular and now they're very big. Why the change?

Bone - It was too new for them then. The stuff played now is more accessible and that has opened a big field.

Robb - In pre-Factual days the things that were being done electronically were not very interesting, but they tended to border on the academic. I think what we do is a bit more mainstream, a bit more pop, more

- VIETNAM -

Vietnam is an innovative, noisy, and danceable Atlanta band whose fantastic set at Alternative Jam 2 earlier astonished and delighted the crowd under the big top. Since then, Vietnam has undergone numerous personnel changes and reduced their lineup from six to three members, but their basic approach to music has remained unchanged. Vietnam currently consists of Dana Downs (bass, vocals), Derek Dixon (drums, vocals,), and original founder Drew Davidson (guitar, effects). The band has been in its present form for only three months but Vietnam's sound is strong and assured. Drew's guitar and effects zoom rich and clean with a high pitched urgency while Derek's drums pound out the basic beat to accompany Dana's bass, vocals, and chanting. Vietnam returned to Nashville earlier this month and were more than happy to explain their trials and troubles. Space does not permit an account of the band's evolution and dissolution. The band's current lineup, however, bears little resemblance to the original Vietnam Drew formed two years ago...:

beat oriented..,we're no longer just amusing ourselves. There's an urgency about Factual music I think we've been able to put across more.

N.I.R. - How does Factual write songs?

Robb - There's about three or four different ways they come. Some of the things like "Dreams" are like jazz in that you have a certain area of freedom to improvise.

Bone - You write them as you play them.

Robb - Yeah, they're open and if the emotions are hot one night, the song will have to be a little bit hotter, and if they're not, then you'll be able to tell it all in the songs. They're very directly accessible to what Factual is doing right then. There is definitely structure, but it's a structure built around emotion.

N.I.R. - Any final comments?

Robb - The most important thing I can say about what we're trying to do is that we're trying to get people to take more of an activist stand toward themselves and their surroundings. Get involved, do something about it, and that's a part of the getting up and dancing. That's why we create such massive dance rhythms and why we talk about things besides whiskey and women.

Bone - We're playing intelligent dance music.

Robb - It's an activist music, it's not a passive music. People shouldn't sit and watch us get off on ourselves, doing our little thing, playing our little riffs. That's not what it's all about; it's about the people that are out there and on our better nights we're able to come across with that so they are the most important thing out there. We're relating our emotions through our instruments, but the audience is the most important thing.

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Drew - When the band first started it was a three-piece [guitar, effects, keyboard, saw, and occasional drums]. It was a lot different, real noisy, heavy electroniss... That was the first incarnation, this is like the sixteenth. With each different one the style changes. We've really gotten a lot more organic, if that's the word for it...

N.I.R. - Is your current sound the basic sound you envisioned when you formed the first Vietnam?

Drew - It's a sound I've been trying to work toward for a year and a half. We just got rid of a lot of noise and fat weight elements of the band. We were basically working toward the type of set-up we've got now, it's the sound we've been wanting for a while.

N.I.R. - Do you have any recording plans?

Drew - Yeah, we're going into Bongo Studios [Atlanta] next week. Current Rage and the Roys recorded there.

R.E.M. recorded their first single there. It's a great little studio.

Dana - We're cutting a single; hopefully, maybe, an E.P.

The band has high hopes for their future as do we. They're some of the nicest people we've ever met (not to disparage any of the other terrific folks we've interviewed) and hopefully will go far. Vietnam's personnel changes seem behind them now, and their future looks bright indeed. Maybe it's the light at the end of the tunnel?

LOCAL NEWS

Things seem to be stabilizing in Musik City USA lately...for better or for worse. There have been a few things happening though, for instance THE EVELINERS are no more.**Also gone are THE SOLUTIONS a.k.a. THE FEATURES.**As are the HOTS, at least as they have been known. There's talk of a revamped image and a new look but who knows which way the wheels may turn. (Personally, I liked their old look).** Dale Brown of the HOTS is now playing with ED FITZGERALD which may be a sign that E.F. is about to return to the stage.** New on the scene are MINIMALOGIC. Billing themselves as "music you can't dance to" [so true, -rr], they debuted to mixed reactions Sunday Aug. 7 at Cantrell's. I don't know if Nashville is ready for what the NY Rocker calls "the downtown sound" and what other people call "noise" (no put-down intended), but it sure pleases me to see such a diverse assortment of music coming from this town. MINIMALOGIC is made up of people from THE DEAD SEALS and Russel Cox, formerly from a copy band called THE UNKNOWNS.**Perennial favorites JASON AND THE NASHVILLE SCORCHERS took New York by storm recently with a scorching show at the Danceteria with THE FLESHEATERS. They've been promised write-ups in several NY papers...sound like the big time to me. **FACTUAL's single is out and it sounds great. Hi-tech rock is great live, but vinyl is its natural home and this disc proves it.**COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY has played a few gigs since our last mention of them, and have managed to attract a decent (?) following. CPS, however, has been officially banned from Spanky's and unofficially from Cantrell's so it's hard to say where they're going now. Watch the party circuit.**PRACTICAL STYLIST (hope we spelled that right) are a new band worth checking out. A tight trio led by Scott Sullivant, the group mixes a few good covers with some nice originals.** MOURNING AFTER, who we told you about first in N.I.R. #1, have gelled into a masterful performing unit and have tightened up their driving sound with noticeable improvement. This band's reputation is growing and it's worth your time to check them out at any of the gigs they'll be playing this month.**Rumor has a possible New York date in the works for the BUNNIES. We wish them luck. **Les Sheilds' latest endeavor, GO JIMMY DUB, is about to debut so I hear. Speaking of musical diversity, G.J.D. is a synthi-pop band. **Alternative Jam favorites VIETNAM returned for a hot Sunday night show August 1. However, they were substantially altered. No longer are they a six-piece rhythm section; now they're a tight trio. Drew Davidson's guitar has that haunting 60's psychedelic reverb sound with contrasts nicely with (former guitarist) Dana Down's solid bass and ethereal voice. Drummer Randy Presley (aka Derek Dixon) makes the most solid use of his minimal drum kit that I've ever seen.**

PEOPLE'S PLATTER PICKS

Steve (White Animals)

Why Don't You Just Rock-
Restless

Generic Flipper
Beautiful Dreamers-
Beatle Bootleg
and - Prince

Vietnam (Dana, Drew, Derek)

Songs of the Free-
Gang of Four
UB40- anything
LC - Duruth Column
"Screaming Blue Murder/
Hit and Run" - Girlschool
Countrymen - Soundtrack
Nunsexmonkrock - Nina Hagen

Kevin (Also a White Animal)

"Planet Rock" - Seulsonic Force
Battle of the DJ'S- HipHop Cassette
"Columbia Colly" - Jah Lion
"Threat to Creation"-
Creation Rebel Dub
"The Message" - Grandmaster Flash

Bone (Factual)

Still - Joy Division
Play to Win - Heaven 17
Flock of Seagulls
"Sitting Still/Radio Free Europe"-
R.E.M.
Digital Cowboy - Our Daughter's
Wedding

***All readers should send us their Platter Picks (we just might print them, you never know). Albums or singles; new or old; 5 or 500 --
JUST SEND THEM!

ROOSTER ^{and} REDTOPS

Rooster and the Redtops are a great rockabilly band from Atlanta who make you gasp in disbelief. While many bands have been influenced by rockabilly, that catchy, toe tapping rhythm that predicated rock n' roll long before I was born, few capture its spirit and sound as aptly as Rooster and the Redtops do. They take the energy of the best modern music, emerse themselves in the music's form, and emerge with a sound you can't help but smile at as you listen.

Rooster and the Redtops are: "Skinny" David Lee (vocals and tatoos), "General Bobby" Glick (upright bass), "Spider" Blake (guitar), "Rockin' Daddy-o Darrio (drums), and Garth "Hammerhead" Swan (guitar). Together only 10 months, they play a set of half oldies and half originals only the most avid record collector could tell apart. They visited Nashville last month on their current "Waffle House" tour and played standout sets at Spanky's, managing to generate a lot of fun with a boppin' beat that never let up. The Redtops' creed is "The Rooster rocks while the Redtops roll". Read on for further explanation.

N.I.R. - Why a rockabilly band?

Daddy-O - Why not?

Skiny Dave - It's the only way my hair looks good. Ask me why I sing the songs.

N.I.R. - Why do you sing the songs?

S.D. - 'Cause I'm the only one who knows all the words. General Bobby - Rockabilly's got a great infectious beat you can really dance to.

Spider - It has groovy little changes that just seem to follow each other.

**Out of towners on the books include the STRAY CATS, LOVE TRACTOR, PYLON, and a hot new band from Memphis, BARKING DOG. Looks like the Nashville scene's perking up, at least in the visiting talent department. Let's hope when Vanderbilt's back in session, that the audiences will perk up too.

Due to a marathon session at the computer typesetter, a number of screw-ups slipped into N.I.R. #3. ACTUEL's drummer is not Randy Ford and while they do have vinyl out now (a nifty 12 in. single), they didn't then. Those statements were meant to pertain to the TIMES. Their single should be out now so check it out. ACTUEL's accompaniment is provided by tapes with a real flesh and blood drummer sitting in occasionally. Also, ACTUEL's bassist is Gary Rabasca, not Gary Rebecca. Finally, PARADOX's fifth member is Bryan D'Beane, not Bryan O'Beane. We won't let this happen again (with any luck). [You'll notice we've eliminated the computer this time -ED] We'd also like to apologize to Tara of BABYLON DANCE BAND whose quote concerning her guitar playing was screwed up with a question (misworded) disparaging her talents. She plays fast, good, and is truly remarkable.

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S.D. - I think it's something everyone can relate to. The punks like us 'cause we're kinda tough. The rockers like us because we rock. The country people like the little twang. The girls like us 'cause we're cute, and the new wavers like us 'cause they're fickle and don't know what they want. We reach a good cross section of people.

N.I.R. - Where did you get your name?

G.B. - We had the name before the band formed. I liked "Redtops" because it sounded kind of hip.

S.D. - We (Bobby and Dave) had the concept and the name with some song ideas. This band took the ideas and made them happen.

N.I.R. - What do you think of all the English rockabilly bands around today?

S.D. - I like the Shakin' Pyramids, but I don't like roots. Most of them are a farce and a lot of them are real snotty.

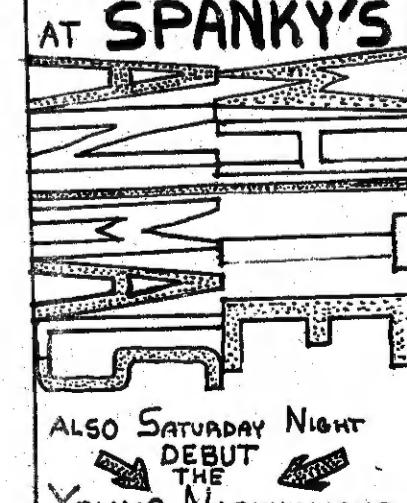
N.I.R. - What's the weirdest place you've ever played? Spider - Jacksonville, AL. It was a club straight out of the Flintstones. The stools and tables were covered in carpet, nails.

S.D. - It was really strange. It's illegal to dance in Alabama, you know...

It's not illegal to dance in Nashville, though, and it's a shame people didn't do more of it that night. However, those who did dance and those who are sorry they didn't will want to check out the "Redtop's" single, "Krazy Little Kittens/Let's Rock". It's a slice of rockabilly purists will treasure and everyone will love to shake to. \$2.00 sent to 10975 Lake Charles Drive, Roswell, GA, 30075 will get you a copy.

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are always more than welcome. PLEASE



A DATE WITH THE

Method Actors

It only takes two to tango they say, and who should know better than Vic Varney of the Method Actors. Vic and David Gamble formed the Method Actors in 1978 in Athens, GA, and with just drums and guitar they managed to win a large following. After years of recording and touring, David left the band to pursue his own projects and Vic recruited Richard Schmidt of The Swimming Pool Q's to fill the drum seat, later adding Stan Saith of Vietnam and his sax. The Method Actor's lineup is really hot and we were fortunate to have them in Nashville two weekends in a row last month. Everybody loved them and so we interviewed this "loud dance band from Athens":

N.I.R. - Was it difficult integrating the sax into the band?

Vic - That was probably the easiest thing to do. Out of necessity, after we got Stan we did marathon practice for four days and it's actually worked out really well.

Stan - It was really fast. I joined the band and in six days I was going to California. Then we played in New York, the Carolinas, and now here.

N.I.R. - How did you get your basic sound?

Vic - It's always changed according to the personnel. We had a real naive attitude when we started out; we wanted to make rock and roll and it wasn't consciously arrived at. We had a set-up where it seemed like we were making as much noise as you needed to have a band. The first time we played everyone said, "Don't get anyone else, this is great", and it worked fine for two years until it was time to do something else.

N.I.R. - There's a lot of talk about the "Athens sound". Do you think it exists?

Vic - Yeah, there's a sound there. It's real hard to step back and look at it the way other people look at it, because I think on the whole there doesn't seem to be that much of a center of focus because we're all aware of how different we are. I suppose there's a lot of overlap to other people's ears and they'll notice like there are a lot of elements of Pylon that sound like the B-52's, and Love Tractor's record in particular is like a distillation of a lot of Athens sound without the vocals. -- We probably are quite easily the most iconoclastic band there. We stand outside of what that sound is, more than anyone else, due to our

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own obvious arrangements. First we started out with the two piece when we really sort of ironed out our sound, then the sax made it also peculiar since not any other band from Athens has a sax. So a lot of it is sort of built-in.

Stan - I think what it comes down to is peers in the same area being influenced by the same things at the same time, and the sounds just come out that way.

N.I.R. - What are your recording plans?

Vic - We're tentatively planning to get off to San Francisco in Sept. and record our next album. We've just recorded something at 688, probably released this fall. It'll be a live EP; it will be a sort of transition thing. It'll have somethings that were recorded with just David and me, then it'll be filled out with the new arrangement. We've got a single out now called "Rang-A-Tang", a remixed version that's not on the album. [Don't miss it! - ED.]

N.I.R. - What about the future?

Vic - I'm following the "full moon" theory these days. Some nights you go out, and you expect a million people to be there, and there's no competition, but nobody shows up because it's a full moon. And some nights you go out, and everybody else in the world is playing that night, and you get a big crowd, and it's great because it's a new moon. I'm not counting on anything anymore.

Maybe Vic's not counting on anything anymore, but we're counting on hearing a lot more from this consummate dance band. Information on the Method Actors and their recordings (including the highly acclaimed Little Figures album) is available from Wax n' Facts Records; 432 Moreland Ave.; Atlanta, GA; 30307.



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